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THE ANTONINE CAMERA OBSCURA OF JHERONIMUS BOSCH

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Abstract: About a peculiar camera obscura painted by Jheronimus Bosch in one of his triptychs, with precise allegorical objectives.
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Alluding to the corruption of the world, especially in his Brabantine-Netherlandish homeland, Jheronimus[1] Bosch developed the metaphor of the world turned upside down (*mundus inversus*)[2], creating various devices that symbolized the subversion of what was originally pure and divine.

This is noticeable, for example, in the triptych of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (Prado, Madrid), in which Bosch allegorized the perversion of both the corporeal world and the passage of time itself which will lead to punishment (the painter was interested in clocks and other technical devices)[3].

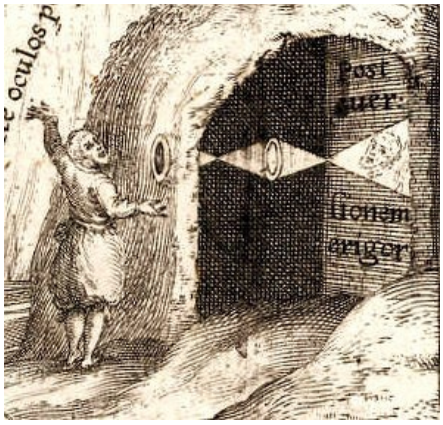
Jheronimus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, details from the central panel (photo: wikimedia.org).

1 Regarding the artist's own preferred designation, see: *Porquê "Jheronims" Bosch?*, 2012 [*online*.]
2 E.g. St. Augustine's *City of God*, IX:9, etc.
3 The idea of corruption is dominant in the central panel of this triptych. For more on this work, see: On the origin and meaning of Bosch's garden, 2015 [*online*], *Bosch the surdo canis*, 2013 [*online*]. About the painter's symbolic grammar and its application in paintings, see the book *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, 2012.

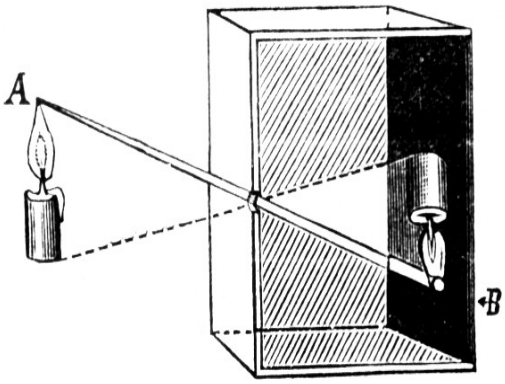
In this logic, a particularly original exercise is observed in the triptych of the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* (MNAA, Lisbon), where the deceitful, heretical and "inverted" antichrist appears in a ruined (corrupted) chapel, on which the artist superimposed several interconnected allusions[4].

In one of them, the concept of a *mundus inversus* is subtly reinforced by a beam of light, suggesting the space as a camera obscura (where the images appear inverted)[5].

Jheronimus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, details from the central panel (photo: PMO).



On camera obscuras: (photo wikimedia.org)



(photo wikimedia.org

In conclusion, this is yet another example of Jheronimus Bosch's exceptional versatility in reinventing his symbolic grammar.

4 For example, the cracked roof and the chapel's configuration suggest the already opened serpent's egg, from which the antichrist emerges (e.g.Is.14:29). On Bosch's interest in the symbolism of the egg, see "O ovo de Bosch / The egg of Bosch" in *Separata 1*, 2012, pp.7-16. Also on this artwork see *The nationalist and rational Jheronimus Bosch*, 2012 [online], and *Jheronimus Bosch – o relojoeiro dos símbolos*, 2012, pp.185-249.
5 *Camera obscuras* were already well known technical marvels in Bosch's time.